DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 303 CS 008 078

AUTHOR Sledge, Andrea Celine
TITLE This Book Reminds Me of You: The Reader as Mentor (Maintaining and Expanding the Range of Reading Interests).
PUB DATE May 84
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (29th, Atlanta, GA, May 6-10, 1984).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Mentors; Reading Habits; Reading Improvement; *Reading Interests; Reading Skills; *Student Motivation; Teacher Student Relationship; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Being a reading mentor to students, colleagues, or friends is one key strategy in the development and promotion of a wide variety of reading interests. Readers serve as mentors by passive means, such as indicating how much they read, being able to name the last book recommended to them, displaying their books visibly, and maintaining their self-image as readers. Reading mentors' goals are the expansion of reading interests, the expansion of uses to which reading is put, and the awareness of when reading is occurring. The more reasons children have for reading, the more likely they are to be effective and enthusiastic readers. Teachers' and reading mentors' credibility is built through talk about what they are reading, the recommendation of books with film or television tie-ins, the reading aloud of opening lines, the recommendation of brief books, and the development of classroom libraries. The benefits of being reading mentors are: (1) the value of their recommendations builds their credibility as a reading mentor; (2) the quality of the reading matter leads to continued reader satisfaction, and growth in reading maturity and sophistication; and (3) mentoring can change others' self-definition as a reader, and they in turn can become reading mentors. (EL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED259303

THIS BOOK REMINDS ME OF YOU:
THE READER AS MENTOR
(MAINTAINING AND EXPANDING THE RANGE OF READING INTERESTS)

Paper presented at the
Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting
of the
International Reading Association
Atlanta, Georgia
May 6-10, 1984

Andrea Celine Sledge
Herbert H. Lehman College
Department of Specialized Services in Education
Bedford Park Boulevard West
Bronx, New York 10468
(212) 960-8173/8307

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Andrea Celine Sledge
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 008078

THIS BOOK REMINDS ME OF YOU:

THE READER AS MENTOR

(MAINTAINING AND EXPANDING THE RANGE OF READING INTERESTS)

"This book reminds me of you."

Henry Bamman, teacher educator, author, volunteer librarian

Mendocino is a small town on the Northern California Coast some four hours drive north of San Francisco. Established in the 1850's, it reminds many visitors of a New England fishing village. Its only library is a private one, staffed by volunteers, and requiring of its members the princely dues of $2.00 per year. Books are purchased based on their appearance on sundry book lists and at specific request. As with any library, borrowers put their names on waiting lists for popular books. But there is another feature which sets this library apart from its public counterparts. A librarian will place a member's name on a waiting list when a specific book strikes him as matching an area of interest of that reader. Handing such a book to the browser, the volunteer may be heard to say, "This book reminds me of you."

The recommendations from book jackets, teachers, and particularly from peers, form the major bases for young readers' book selections. For example, at a residential facility for juvenile offenders, it was the custom to take book requests from the wards when quarterly purchases of paperbacks were being planned. The youngster who ordered a title was the first person to read the book, and often that book was passed from hip pocket to

hip pocket as the reader's friends borrowed it to read. Frequently these copies did not find a permanent home on the school library shelves. Prison library losses also suggest the types and titles of books which recommend themselves or are recommended to readers.

The annotation for this presentation reads:

"What and who influences reading interests? Everything and anyone. Ideas for teachers, parents and peers to maintain and expand the reading range are explored."

Today, I do not present ideas for maintaining and expanding reading interests, but rather I will talk about one key strategy without which other ideas may not have long-lasting effects, and one which operates at all age levels: mentoring.

You, the teacher, are the reader's mentor, whether that reader is your student, your colleague or your friend. No -- more accurately, readers are mentors to readers and to future readers: close, trusted, experienced counselors and guides in the development and promotion of a wide variety of reading interests.

Projected Image as a Reader

Readers "mentor" by passive as well as active example. This first consideration generates the first questions you must ask yourself:

Are your perceived as a reading mentor?

How well do you serve as a model of a reader?

What about you declares: "THIS PERSON IS A READER!"?

There are a number of behaviors which might contribute to

that projected picture of READER. One of the most obvious is how much you read -- all forms and types of reading, not just recreational reading. (In my mother's eyes, I was once famous, or infamous, for reading while brushing my teeth and combing my hair.) Another common indicator of READER is the ability to name readily the last book you recommended to some one. Take a few moments to write down the following [transparency]:

- A book that influenced or affected you personally or professionally
- A book that you have read more than once, or would read again
- What made these books powerful and meaningful to you?
- Name an author whom you have read comprehensively. What is special about this writer?

Now share this with the people sitting nearest to you today. My choices would include Carl Rogers' Freedom to Learn., C.S. Lewis' Till We Have Faces, Jane Austen, and Dick Francis.

Your environment speaks silent "volumes." Does your home, classroom, or office say, "This person is a reader"? Indeed, where are your books -- are they visible to your visitors and to your students? Does it cost more to move your books than it does to move you? When did you last look at some one else's bookshelf? Don't look too closely; I might not want to lend that one. Browse a bookshelf, know a reader, know a person.

Self-Characterization As a Reader

Your self-image as a reader is communicated to your students, and affects their perceptions of books and reading. The Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (Smith, 1978) is a 20 item, five point Likert Scale which is most useful in tapping attitude through what the respondent does about reading, as opposed to what he says about reading [transparency of the measure]. Please complete the measure and score it. [Items cover "very unlike me ...very like me" behaviors and comments in a number of situations.] The results of this measure have been analysed by Smith, Smith, and Mikulecky (p. 104, 1978) in terms of Krathwohl's taxonomy of attitude [transparency]:

Attending: generally aware and tolerant of reading

Responding: under certain circumstances, willing to read; choose to read and occasionally enjoy it

Valuing: accept worth of reading as a value to be preferred and extend to others

Organization: reading -- part of an organized value system; habitual, almost "instinctive"

Characterization: reading is seen as crucial to the person

Your aim as a teacher, your function as reading mentor, should be to move the child from attending along the continuum of attitude toward characterization.

Readers Mentoring Readers

Uses of Reading

Though your reading is a distinctly private and personal act, it must "go public" in the mentoring function. Among those public acts of "witness" are the uses to which you put readiing. The pleasures of reading are not just recreational ones, but also the pleasures of mastery, of answering a question, of learning, of accomplishing a task. One of your tasks as a reading mentor thus becomes the expansion not only of reading interests, but also the expansion of the uses to which reading is put, and the awareness of when reading is occurring. Tovey (1976) questioned first graders about their perceptions of what constituted reading in the classroom and when it took place. Their awareness of "reading" was much narrower than than of an adult. Guthrie (1979) described the uses of reading in the work place, and subsequently defined broader categories of literacy behaviors. The variety of uses to which reading may be put needs your attention, valuing, and promotion. The larger the number of functions a youngster has for reading, the more likely she is to be an effective and enthusiastic reader. Additionally, you must take advantage, in the classroom, of the uses for reading which a child brings from home. Heath (1980) investigating the functions of literacy in working class homes, found that it was inaccurate to say that the child came to school without uses for reading. Rather one must say that the child comes with uses for reading which are not frequently found in the classroom. Begin with what

the child brings in terms of literacy use, and build and expand from that point. Can you honestly say that you have ever had a child who come to you as a tabla rasa regarding functions for literacy?

Peer Influences -- Peer Mentors

Gallo (1982) reminds us that student recommendations are the most powerful ones for other students. It is another student's enthusiasm which will move an adolescent to a book rack when nothing else will. One means of awakening the reading mentors in your classroom is to ask of your students: "What have you read lately that's good?" (p. 88).

Teacher (and Other Adult) Influence

Your credibility in the role of teacher/reading mentor is built more slowly as 1) you talk about what you are reading, 2) recommend books with film or television tie-ins, 3) read aloud opening lines, 4) recommend brief books, rather than the "dreaded" long ones, and 5) develop classroom libraries. You seduce your readers with enthusiasm, knowledge, interest, and concern with books and children. Woo them. Sell books to your readers in light of your own and the other person's interest. Your enthusiasm for your own reading will ring more true than "teacher-interest" in your student's reading. Imagine a seventeen year old student in a remedial reading lab devouring a box of Dr. Seuss! It happened when he saw his teacher reading them with much amusement. No suggestions were made that he read them, but curiosity drew him to that corner of the classroom.

Share book reviews. The reviewer becomes a surrogate mentor, and her enthusiasm and critical judgement function in lieu of your own for your students. But don't select the sometimes palid reviews of professional journals, but rather the opinionated, full-blooded reviews of the popular press. Use the mass media reviews from publications which your students would be likely to read, and post these reviews with their citations. Recurring reviewers may become the favored arbiters of taste for specific students.

Read to your children, selling the book by the author's use of the language. Read aloud language which is meant to be read -- well-structured, interesting, and intriguing prose. The child will learn that he can prolong the joy by reading on his own.

Finally, you cannot mentor effectively if you do not know your reader. Without knowing the child's interests, concerns, and history, how else can you say "I have a book that reminds me of you"?

Without knowledge of the reader and of the books, or with only a superficial knowledge, and without enthusiasm for the book or its possibilities for the reader, the recommendation is useless.

Results

1. The value of your recommendations builds your credibility as a reading mentor (Gallo, 1982).
2. The quality of the reading matter leads to continued reader

satisfaction (O'Connor, 1980), and growth in reading maturity and sophistication. To quote Henry Bamman once more: "Discrimination is good taste practiced again and again."

3. Mentoring can change the mentored person's self-definition as a reader, and he in turn can become a reading mentor.

Summary

Christenbury (1981) speaks of "reading epiphanies", when a book takes hold, and you must read it to its conclusion without pause. With such an experience, you become a changed person. I wish to read the first chapter of Italo Calvino's _If on a a winter's night a traveler_, with which the author defines himself as a reader. [Chapter is read.]

Passionate readers, this book reminds me of you.

REFERENCES

Christenbury, L. (1981). Two stacks later: Developing lifelong readers. Virginia English Bulletin, 31(2), 58-59.

Gallo, D. (1982). Keeping in touch -- what the real experts tell us. English Journal, 71(2), 87-89.

Guthrie, J. T. (1984, May). Reading activities in occupational and leisure settings: Cases and quantifications. In J.T. Guthrie (Chair), Research training workshop: Qualitative methods. Preconvention institute conducted at the 29th Annual Convention of the International Reading Association, Atlanta, Georgia.

Heath, S.B. (1980). The functions and uses of literacy. Journal of Communication, 30(1), 123-133.

O'Connor, M.E. (1980). A study of the reading preferences of high school students. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 185 524)

Smith, C.B., Smith, S.L., & Mikulecky, L. (1978). Teaching reading in secondary school content subjects: A bookthinking approach. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Tovey, D. R. (1976). Children's perceptions of reading. The Reading Teacher, 29(6), 536-540.